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THE CHRIST-*LOGOS* QUESTION IN AMELIUS

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ABSTRACT. The main thesis of Christians, according to which Jesus is the divine *Logos*, the Son of God, is *unacceptably* illogical for Plotinus closest disciples. The irrationality of Christian doctrine lies in having identified a unique, personal and corporal individual with the divine principle. Such a statement implies identifying God himself with something passive and irrational, which is inadmissible to Amelius and Porphyry. Amelius helps Plotinus to answer the Gnostic Christians attending the school of Plotinus. In his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (XI.19.1–8) Eusebius refers to Amelius' comment to the prologue to the Gospel of John. Unlike Numenius, for whom the demiurgic intellect, compared to Zeus, is the second cause of what comes to be, for Amelius, this second cause is the *logos*, which is the formal cause (*kath' hon*), the efficient cause (*di' hou*) and the material cause (*en hôi*) of what comes to be. Amelius links this conception of *logos* – which is being, life and thought – with Heraclitus (*DK* 22 B1) and with the prologue to the Gospel of John. Likewise, Amelius, based on the interpretation of *Timaeus* (39e7–9), established a triad of the demiurgic intellects (= the three Kings of the apocryphal *Second Letter*). In his Neoplatonic rereading, the *logos* of the beginning of the fourth Gospel has a very similar function to that performed by the world soul. On the one hand, it is the supreme cause of all the things which come to be, and, on the other hand, redirects its energy towards the superior god from which it comes.
KEYWORDS: Amelius, Christ, Logos, Intellect, Demiurge, Neoplatonism.

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The prologue to the Gospel according to John is one of the most philosophical texts of the New Testament, as it contains frequent transversal references connecting Platonism, Judaism and Christianity in the early centuries, whether it be to defend or refute it. To refute this connection, for example, starting from the Stoic theory of the double *logos*, Porphyry puts forward the following argument: Christ, as *logos*, is "interior" or "proffered"; if the *logos* is proffered, it cannot be

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"substantial", and so therefore cannot be god; on the other hand, if the *logos* is interior it cannot have descended to Earth and therefore be identified with Christ.[1]

Amelius, in turn, the fellow student of Porphyry in the School of Plotinus, quotes almost literally part of the beginning of the fourth Gospel, with special interest in the doctrine of the *logos* explained in it. In this context the *logos* of John's prologue can be interpreted as a "bridge" between the Gospel and Philosophy (Vollenweider 2009). But the exegetic problem lies in discovering whether the way in which Amelius goes about commenting the passage from John demonstrates a position for or against Christianity. Nevertheless, it is difficult to answer this question, as it requires a reconsideration of the notion of *logos* based on the Neoplatonic re-interpretation of Amelius.

1. Amelius, *senior* disciple of Plotinus

Among the disciples of Plotinus with whom Porphyry maintained close links, we must include Amelius (*c.* AD 216/226 – *c.* 290/300),[2] a native of Etruria, whose family name was Gentilianus. He was the oldest and most faithful of the friends and disciples of Plotinus in Rome and devoted himself to defending the doctrine of his teacher.[3] Henry (1934, 3-6) considers Amelius "the person who organized the school of Plotinus, and in organizing it enabled the Neoplatonic philosophy to penetrate the Roman world." But before he encountered Plotinus in Rome, Amelius had been a disciple of the Stoic Lysimachus.[4] He was also a fervent admirer of Numenius and copied and compiled all his writings.[5] When Porphyry arrived in Rome, around September 263, Amelius had already been part of the school of Plotinus for seventeen years, since 246. He was to remain with his teacher for twenty-four years until 269, a year before his death, when he retired to Apamea in Syria. When the Greek philosophers, probably from Athens, accused Plotinus of plagiarising the doctrines of Numenius, the Stoic Platonist Tryphon informed Amelius, who wrote his book *On the doctrinal difference between Plotinus and Numenius*, which he dedicated to Porphyry using the name Βασιλεύς, i.e. "King".[6] Porphyry also mentions the letter Amelius wrote to him in these terms: "Amelius greets the King".[7]

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[1] Cf. Porphyry, *Contra Christianos,* fr. 112 (Ramos Jurado = fr. 86 Harnack). See *infra* n. 41.

[2] On the chronology of Amelius, see Brisson (1994, 161).

[3] Cf. Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 7.1–5.

[4] Cf. Porphyry, *VPlot.* 3.42–43.

[5] Cf. Porphyry, *VPlot.* 3.44.

[6] Porphyry, *VPlot.* 17.1–13.

[7] Porphyry, *VPlot.* 17.16.

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When Porphyry heard Plotinus for the first time, when he was thirty,[8] he presented a written refutation of his doctrine, attempting to demonstrate, following his previous teacher Longinus, that the intelligibles are to be found outside the Intellect. Plotinus requested Amelius to read this, and once he had read it "to resolve the errors he had incurred from a lack of understanding of our doctrines".[9] To refute this, Amelius wrote a long text *Against the aporias of Porphyry*.[10] Porphyry in turn composed a reply to this text and Amelius then made a counter-response. It seems that then Porphyry was silenced and wrote a "palinode", which he read in class. From then on, Amelius was entrusted with the treatises of Plotinus, arousing in his teacher "the ambition to embody and develop further his extensive philosophy",[11] and in Amelius "arousing the wish to write".[12] In turn, Longinus replied to Porphyry's palinode with an examination of Plotinus' treatise *On Intellect, Ideas and Being* (*Enn.* V, 9 [5]), in which he defends not only that the intelligibles are to be found outside the Intellect , but also that the "model" for the *Timaeus* is posterior to the Demiurge.[13] In the *Reply to the letter of Amelius*, which is the length of a book, Longinus also responds to the epistle Amelius sent to him headed: *On the character of the philosophy of Plotinus.*[14]

2. Christ–the reason principle (*logos*)

In his *Praeparatio Evangelica* Eusebius of Caesarea (*c.* AD 260/265 – *c.* 339/340) quotes only a few lines from Amelius, but these are particularly relevant to the study of the hermeneutic connections between Platonism and sacred scripture. Eusebius is not only "the father of ecclesiastical history", as Baur (1834) called him, but also the author of a major work of exegesis and apologetics. The diptych formed by the *Praeparatio* (15 books) and the *Demonstratio Evangelica* (20 books, of which only the first ten are conserved, along with some fragments of Book XV) constitute the most extensive Christian apologetics in the whole of antiquity (cf. Morlet 2009, 7–17). The great apologetics of the *Praeparatio* is widely known and studied,[15] as it contains a large number of pagan, Jewish and Christian citations of

[8] Cf. Porphyry, *VPlot.* 4.8–9.

[9] Porphyry, *VPlot.* 18.13–14.

[10] Porphyry, *VPlot.* 18.15–16.

[11] Porphyry, *VPlot.* 18.21–22.

[12] Porphyry, *VPlot.* 18.23.

[13] Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* I.322.24.

[14] Porphyry, *VPlot.* 20.97–104.

[15] The text of the *Praeparatio Evangelica* is edited in the collection "Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte" (*GCS*, 43, 1–2) by K. Mras, Berlin, 1954-1956; and it is also available in French translation, with text and comments, in "Sources

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major importance for the reconstruction of the lost literature and the history of the texts.

Within a context of anti-pagan polemics, the main aim of the *Praeparatio* is to demonstrate the solidity of the Christian truth exposed in the Bible and make it easier to understand for those who are not Christians, but pagans in origin and training.[16] In Book XI of the *Praeparatio* Eusebius of Caesarea attempts to demonstrate the existence of a consonance in many doctrinal points between what the philosophers say and the sacred books of the Hebrews.[17] From a Christian perspective, the exposition of the theme of the second cause is equivalent to questioning the existence of the Son of God and of his function. After references to Philo of Alexandria, Plato and Plotinus, Eusebius approaches the position of Numenius, which he links to the central thesis on the three kings of the universe, exposed in the *Second Letter*, attributed to Plato.[18] Eusebius differentiates three gods in Numenius: (1) the first god, limited to contemplating the intelligible; (2) the second god, who inscribes the intelligible in the sensible; and (3) the sensible world, which participates in the intelligible.[19] Immediately afterwards, Eusebius takes up the fragment in which Amelius comments on the beginning of the prologue to the Gospel of John and puts forward his conception of the *logos*:

> "And this then was the reason-principle (*logos*) in accordance with which (*kath' hon*), eternally existing as it is, things that come to be come to be, as indeed would be the view of Heraclitus, and, by Zeus, which the Barbarian considers, established as it is in the rank and dignity of a first principle, to be 'with god (*pros theon*)', and to be god, through the agency of which (*di' hou*) absolutely everything has come to be, and in which (*en hôi*) that which comes to be has taken on the nature of a living thing, life and being; and that it fell into bodies and took on flesh, and assumed the appearance of man, along with also showing by this action the grandeur of its nature; and then again, after suffering dissolution, it is divinized once again and becomes god, even such as it

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chrétiennes", by E. des Places, Paris, 1974-1991; and in "Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos", translated into Spanish by J. M. Nieto Ibáñez, Madrid, 2011-2015.

[16] Cf. Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* I.1.12.4–6.

[17] Cf. Eusebius, *PE* XI, pr., 3.4–5.

[18] The clearly apocryphal *Second Letter* exercised an essential function for the Neoplatonists, who recognised in the doctrine of the three kings the doctrine of the three hypostases: the One, the Intellect, the Soul. See Rist (1965); and see also Saffrey and Westerink (1968-1997, II.xx–lix).

[19] Eusebius, *PE* XI.17.11–18 = Numenius fr. 11 (Des Places); *PE* XI.18.6–10 = Numenius fr. 12 (Des Places); *PE* XI.18.13–14 = Numenius fr. 13 (Des Places). On the three gods of Numenius, see Müller (2010).

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was prior to being drawn down into body and flesh and man."[20] (Eusebius, *PE* XI.19.1–8 Mras; trans. Dillon 2009, 30–31; see also German trans. Böhm 2010, 115–116).

After quoting Heraclitus (*DK* 22 B 1),[21] Amelius refers to John as "the Barbarian" (ὁ βάρβαρος),[22] instead of by his name, to prove the existence of an eternal *logos*, by virtue of which the things that come to be were generated. If we place this reference within the context of the discussion of the *logos,* the exegesis of Amelius shows subtle transmutations in both the interpretation and the use of the term in John's text, adapted to a Neoplatonic metaphysical architecture. Amelius was familiar with the Christian literature of the time, but his interpretation was influenced by the Orphic poems, the Chaldean oracles, and the Gnostics (cf. Dillon 2009, 37–38). In his *Life of Plotinus,* 16, Porphyry tells us that the two gnostic apocalypses – the platonizing treatises *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes,* and perhaps also a version of *Marsanes* – circulated in the philosophical seminar imparted by Plotinus in Rome in the years 244–265, and that the *Zostrianos* in particular was scrupulously criticised by Amelius.[23]

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[20] "Καὶ οὗτος ἄρα ἦν ὁ λόγος καθ' ὃν αἰεὶ ὄντα τὰ γινόμενα ἐγίνετο, ὡς ἂν καὶ ὁ Ἡράκλειτος ἀξιώσειε καὶ νὴ Δί' ὃν ὁ βάρβαρος ἀξιοῖ ἐν τῇ τῆς ἀρχῆς τάξει τε καὶ ἀξίᾳ καθεστηκότα πρὸς θεὸν εἶναι καὶ θεὸν εἶναι· δι' οὗ πάνθ' ἁπλῶς γεγενῆσθαι· ἐν ᾧ τὸ γενόμενον ζῶν καὶ ζωὴν καὶ ὂν πεφυκέναι· καὶ εἰς τὰ σώματα πίπτειν καὶ σάρκα ἐνδυσάμενον φαντάζεσθαι ἄνθρωπον μετὰ τοῦ καὶ τηνικαῦτα δεικνύειν τῆς φύσεως τὸ μεγαλεῖον· ἀμέλει καὶ ἀναλυθέντα πάλιν ἀποθεοῦσθαι καὶ θεὸν εἶναι, οἷος ἦν πρὸ τοῦ εἰς τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν σάρκα καὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον καταχθῆναι." Cf. Des Places (1982, 57–58).

For a detailed analysis of this fragment, see Rist (1969); Dörrie (1972 [= 1976]); Brisson (1987, 840–843; 2011, 283-287); Abramowski (2005, 514–518); Dillon (2009, 30–43); Vollenweider (2009, 378–394); Böhm (2010, 116–121); Riedweg (2016, 153–155). Both Theodoret of Cyrus (*c.* AD 393 – *c.* 458/466) in his *The Graecarum Affectionum Curatio* or *Cure of the Greek Maladies*, subtitled *The Truth of the Gospel proved from Greek Philosophy* (II.87–89), and Cyril of Alexandria (the Patriarch of Alexandria from 412 to 444), in his *Against Julian* (*PG* 76.936a–b) quote almost exactly the same text as Eusebius. Likewise, Basil of Caesarea (329/330 - 379) alludes to the exegesis of Amelius in the Prologue to the Gospel of John in his Homily on "In the beginning was the Logos" (*PG* 31.472c). Cf. Saffrey and Westerink (1968-1997, V. lxii–lxiii); and Brisson (1987, 840, n. 67).

[21] Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* VII.132 = *DK* B 1. On this quote from Heraclitus, see Tarán (1986, 6–7, n. 28).

[22] The name "barbarian" (βάρβαρος) has a positive connotation when Amelius applies it to John and evaluates the fourth Gospel "as a theological-philosophical testimony to Christ, the Logos." (Becker 2016, 157).

[23] Among the existing Christian Gnostics in Plotinus' time who formed part of a sect derived from ancient philosophy (possibly Platonism), Porphyry highlights the followers of Adelphios and Aquilinus, who had the writings of Alexander the Libyan, Philokomos,

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The prologue to the Gospel of John, written in an adverse but familiar tradition, attracted and fascinated the senior disciple of Plotinus, a Neoplatonist with earlier training in Stoicism. However, this is not strictly speaking an exegesis or commentary, but rather a "paraphrase" as Vollenweider (2009, 381–383) suggests, fairly literal in what concerns John (1, 1–4), and more schematic, adapted to the Platonic ontology where it refers to questions such as the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ.

According to Zoumpos (1956), in this Fragment 1 of his edition, Amelius establishes an opposition between John's logos and the world soul. Dörrie (1972, 79-80 [1976, 500]), in turn, considers that in the first verses of John's Gospel Amelius discovers the first step towards relating Jesus the man and the divine logos. Thus, he describes in Neoplatonic terms the "descent" of the logos. However, with this description Amelius goes further than the author of the libri Platonicorum, referred to by Augustine in his Confessions (VII.13), who seems to have denied even the possibility that the logos might have caused the impression of being transformed into man (φαντάζεσθαι ἄνθρωπον). According to "the barbarian" (John), using a metaphorical expression taken from the Platonic tradition, the logos fell among bodies, and after getting dressed (ἐνδυσάμενον) in flesh, assumed the appearance of man (cf. Dörrie 1972, 79 [1976, 500]).

From a cosmic-cosmological perspective, Brisson (1987, 840–843) considers that Amelius identifies the *logo*s of St. John with the Neoplatonic world soul; Dillon (2009, 36–37), on the other hand, prefers to keep the *logos* separate, as an emanation of the demiurgic intellect, passing through the world soul to the sphere of matter. Abramowski's (2005) reading, in turn, proposes the identification of the *logos* with the second demiurgic cause. Thus, the *logos* is the instrument of the higher God, which constitutes its prime cause. In this sense, for Amelius the *logos* is the second cause and this is the formal cause (καθ' ὃν), the efficient cause (δι' οὗ) and the material cause (ἐν ᾧ) of what comes to be (cf. Brisson, 2011, 285–286). Thanks to the *logos*, through it, absolutely all things have come to exist. The *logos* generates life and being everywhere.

Demostratos and Lydos (or: Demostratos of Libya), and composed the *Apocalypses* of Zoroaster, Zostrianos, Nikotheos, Allogenes and Messos (cf. Porphyry, *VPlot.* 16.1–7). Additionally, as these same Gnostics maintained that Plato had not plumbed the depths of the intelligible essence, Plotinus wrote the treatise *Against the Gnostics* (*Ennead* II.9 [33]; cf. Porphyry, *VPlot.* 5.33), which was followed by Amelius, who wrote forty books against the *Apocalypse* of Zostrianos, and by Porphyry, who composed numerous refutations against the *Apocalypse* of Zoroaster, attempting to demonstrate that this book was completely false, recently written by the founders of the sect (cf. Porphyry, *VPlot.* 16.9–17; see Turner 2006, 26).

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For Riedweg (2016, 154–155), following the representation of Porphyry put forward in *De philosophia ex oraculis haurienda* (fr. 345f. Smith), Amelius may have seen in Jesus an example of "divine man" (θεῖος ἀνήρ). This may explain why the historical and biographical data for Jesus are put aside: the incarnation seems to be reduced to a simple external transformation – according to a formulation which presents traits related with Docetism –[24] and the death on the cross is understood as a dissolution, followed by a re-divinization, "and then again, after suffering dissolution, it is divinized once again and becomes god (ἀμέλει καὶ ἀναλυθέντα πάλιν ἀποθεοῦσθαι καὶ θεὸν εἶναι)" (*PE* XI.19.6–7). In this approach, for his re-interpretation of the *logos,* Amelius may have come across a heterodox reading of the prologue to the Gospel of John, for example such as that proposed by Paul of Samosata (Bishop of Antioch from 260 to 268), who seems to have rejected the incarnation of the *logos* in the strict sense of the term.[25]

In our opinion, we consider it inevitable and essential to place the assimilation of Christ to the logos within the architecture of the metaphysical system which Amelius constructed following the Neoplatonic guidelines Plotinus had established in his school. Even Augustine himself says that he has compared John's prologue with the treatises of Plotinus on the divine logos (cf. Henry 1934, 235). From a Neoplatonic viewpoint, Amelius also makes this comparison, earlier than the Bishop of Hippo.

3. The three demiurgic intellects

In the metaphysical architecture of Amelius we find the triad of Plotinus – One, Intellect, Soul –, but interpreted through a specific Neoplatonic approach.[26] Only one testimony is conserved on the One of Amelius, transmitted in a passage of Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus* where he differentiates between the different interpretations of the *Timaeus* (39e7–9). First, Proclus Diadochus examines the opinions of the most ancient exegetes, focusing on the most innovative arguments about the text.[27] The first opinion he explains is that of Amelius who, based on this passage in the *Timaeus*, establishes a triad of demiurgic intellects.

[24] See Rist (1969, 230): "It appears that the version of Christianity Amelius knew was in some sense docetic." The Docetist influence is based on the comparison established between σὰρξ ἐγένετο (John) and σάρκα ἐνδυσάμενον (Amelius). Cf. Brisson (1987, 842).

[25] Cf. Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII.30.11.

[26] On being, intellect and the One in Amelius, see Massagli (1982); and also Corrigan (1987).

[27] Proclus, *in Tim.* III.103.16–18.

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> It is from these words in particular that Amelius established his triad of Demiurgic intellects. He calls the first 'that which is' (*onta*) from the phrase that 'which Living Being is', while the second he calls 'that which has' (*echonta*) from the fact that it 'has' [forms present to it] (for it is not the case that the second intellect *is* [the forms] but they are instead introduced in it), while the third intellect is 'that which sees' from the fact that it 'saw' [that it had these forms].[28] (Proclus, *in Tim.* III.103.19–23 Diehl; trans. Baltzly 2013, 187–188).

(1) The first demiurgic intellect, "that which is" (ὤν) – derived from the expression ὅ ἐστι ζῷον –, is the Intellect which is inseparable from the intelligible, the sphere of the forms, which can be considered as the "intelligible model" (παράδειγμα νοητόν) of all sensible things (*in Tim.* I.309.23–24). This first demiurge, which corresponds to the first intellect, is the one who has desired, because it has produced only of its own volition (I.361.29; I.309.22; I.362.2–4).

(2) The second demiurgic intellect, "that which has" (ἔχων) – derived from the participle ἐνούσας (it *is not*, but rather, the forms *are* in it) –, is the *logos* which contains within it all the *logoi*, i.e. all images of the forms. This second demiurgic intellect is the "intellective *ousia*" (*in Tim.* I.309.17), the intermediate god which acts as the "generative power (δύναμις γεννητική) (I.309.24). This is the second cause, the true demiurge, because, in contrast to the first who desires, this second demiurge calculates (I.298.22-23), so that it can be categorised as "architect" (I.361.30–361.1), as it produces only obeying an order from the first demiurge (I.361.29).

(3) The third demiurgic intellect, "that which sees" (ὁρῶν) – derived from the καθορᾶν –, is the "source of souls" (πηγπὴ ψυχῶν) (*in Tim.* I.309.18). This third *noûs* produces and understands the infinity of souls. Amelius says of it that it divides "into parts", because in it are found "the models of the parts" (I.425. 21). This is the god which he considers to be "truly" the demiurgic intellect (I.309.24–25), as it is identified with the craftsman who works with his own hands (αὐτουργός) (I.361.29–30), i.e. it produces, transmitting what it receives by setting to work on it (I.398.23–25).[29]

Proclus criticises the distinction Amelius makes between the first and second demiurgic intellect, since according to him, Plato had not differentiated between "that which Living Being is" (ὅ ἐστι ζῷον) and that in which the forms of living be-

[28] <Ἀμέλιος> μὲν οὖν τὴν τριάδα τῶν δημιουργικῶν νόων ἀπὸ τούτων μάλιστα συνίστησι τῶν ῥημάτων, τὸν μὲν πρῶτον 'ὄντα' καλῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὅ <ἐστι ζῷον>, τὸν δὲ δεύτερον 'ἔχοντα' ἀπὸ τοῦ <ἐνούσας> (οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ δεύτερος, ἀλλ' εἴσεισιν ἐν αὐτῷ), τὸν δὲ τρίτον 'ὁρῶντα' ἀπὸ τοῦ <καθορᾶν>. See Brisson (1987, 832–833).

[29] See *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 33 (De Places).

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ings are.[30] The objection of Proclus Diadochus is summed up in the following statement : "'that which is' is not *something different* from 'that which has' (οὐκ ἄλλος ἐστὶν ὁ ὢν τοῦ ἔχοντος)." (*in Tim.* III.103.26–27). Next, Proclus refers to Numenius' doctrine of the three divine instances, which he also criticises, this time for not differentiating between the second god – the intellect (νοῦς – and the third god – "the one who thinks discursively" (ὁ διανοούμενος), i.e. applies reasoned thinking (διάνοια).[31]

The soul is found below the third demiurgic intellect, constituting the authentic demiurge, called the "source of souls", since this third is the one which has put "intelligence in soul, and soul in body, and so he constructed the universe." (30b6; cf. Proclus, *in Tim*. I.398.25–26).

For Plotinus, the amphibious soul between the two worlds generates matter and projects the *logoi* onto it, enabling the generation of the sensible world (cf. Santa Cruz 1994, 39–40). Thus, the sensible cosmos is a *blend* (μικτόν) of *logos* and matter, in which the qualities contributed by the *logos* are amalgamated into the matter, which lacks all *logos* and in itself is evil. However, as matter is generated as the final term of the processional display, the evils of the world are inevitable (cf. *Enn.* III.2 [47] 2.32–36; see Plato, *Timaeus*, 48a1–5).[32] To some extent, Plotinus likens the soul to the *logos.* Amelius seems to coincide with his teacher on this point, but he is more influenced by the Stoics, as he had been the disciple of Lysimachus the Stoic prior to joining the school of Plotinus in Rome.

The proodic *logos* generates the lower realities of the soul (*Enn.* V.1 [10] 7.42–49), which Plotinus calls nature (φύσις). The demiurgic intellect provides the soul with the *logoi* (*Enn*. V.9 [5] 3.30–32) which the soul then uses to model the sensible world.

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[30] Amelius defends the existence of intelligible forms of evil things (= anti-forms). Cf. Asclepius of Tralles, *In Nicomachi Geraseni Introductionem arithmeticam commentaria* I.44.4–5 Tarán: Ἀμέλιος δέ, οὐκ οἶδα πόθεν ὁρμηθείς, καὶ τῶν κακῶν οἴεται λόγους εἶναι παρὰ τῷ δημιουργῷ. Perhaps the third demiurgic intellect may comprehend the existence of evil, and hence recognise its different manifestations in the sensible world.

[31] See Proclus, *in Ti.* III.103.28–32 = Numenius fr. 22 (Des Places): "Numenius on the other hand situates the first god to accord with 'that which Living Being is (ὅ ἐστι ζῷον)' and says that he cognises calling in the help of the second (ἐν προσχρήσει τοῦ δευτέρου νοεῖν), while he arranges the second to accord with intellect and this [god] in its turn creates calling in the help of the third (ἐν προσχρήσει τοῦ τρίτου δημιουργεῖν). The third [god he arranges to] accord with that which makes use of discursive thinking (ὁ διανοούμενος)." Trans. Baltzly (2013, 188). Cf. Tarrant (2004, 185–186); Müller (2015, 10–11).

[32] Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* III.2 [47] 2.32–36.

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According to Proclus, in contrast to Theodorus of Asine – a disciple of Porphyry and later student of Iamblichus –,[33] Amelius places a triad of demiurges immediately after the One, establishing a connection between the passage cited from the *Timaeus* (39e7–9) and the three Intellects and the three Kings, taken from the apocryphal *Second Letter* (312e1–4),[34] attributed to Plato:

> Amelius makes the Demiurge triple and says that there are three Intellects and three Kings, one who is, one who has, one who sees.[35] These three differ from each other, because the first Intellect really is [5] what he is, while the second is the Intelligible which is in him, but he has the Intelligible which is prior to him and certainly participates in him, which is the reason why he is second. The third too is the Intelligible in him, for every Intellect is the same as the Intelligible that is coupled with him, but he has the Intellect in the second and he sees the Intellect that is first, for the greater the separation the feebler the possession. He assumes, then, that these three Intellects and Demiurges are [to be [10] identified with] the three Kings in Plato (*Ep*. 2, 312e1–4)[36] and the three in Orpheus[37] – Phanes, Ouranos and Kronos – but the one for him who is the Demiurge in particular is Phanes.[38] (Proclus, *in Tim.* I.306.1–14 Diehl; trans. Runia and Share 2008, 160–161).

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[33] Theodorus of Asine (*c*. AD 275 – *c*. 350) was first one of the last disciples who reached the school of Plotinus in Rome. Later, for almost twenty years he followed the teachings of Iamblichus in his school in Apamea in Syria; cf. Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* V.5 (Goulet). Proclus mentions that Theodorus, influenced by the doctrines of Numenius, occupied himself with psychology and ontology, "basing his concepts on the letters, characters and numbers." (*in Tim.* II.274.10–277.26). On Theodorus of Asine (Messenia), the Neoplatonist philosopher, see Saffrey (2016).

[34] Saffrey and Westerink (1968-1997, II.lviii-lix) distinguish the following two schools of interpretation of pseudo-platonic *Second Letter*: (1) the "Syrian" school of Amelius, Iamblichus, and Theodore, who identify the three kings with three intellects or demiurges that are subordinated to the One; and (2) the "Roman" school of Plotinus and Porphyry (preceded by Moderatus and fol lowed by Julian and Proclus), who identified the first "King of all things" with the One. Although he does not posit a supreme One above the triad, Numenius is clearly a precursor of the Syrian school. On Moderatus of Gades, see Zamora Calvo (2013).

[35] Cf. Proclus, *in Tim.* I. 361.26–362.9; 398.16–26. See Brisson (1987, 832).

[36] See *supra* n. 18 and n. 34.

[37] *Orphicorum fragmenta* 96 Kern = 153 V Bernabé.

[38] Ἀμέλιος> δὲ τριττὸν ποιεῖ τὸν δημιουργὸν καὶ τρεῖς νοῦς, βασιλέας τρεῖς, τὸν ὄντα, τὸν ἔχοντα, τὸν ὁρῶντα. διαφέρουσι δὲ οὗτοι, διότι ὁ μὲν πρῶτος νοῦς ὄντως ἐστὶν ὅ ἐστιν, ὁ δὲ δεύτερος ἔστι μὲν τὸ [5] ἐν αὐτῷ νοητόν, ἔχει δὲ τὸ πρὸ αὐτοῦ καὶ μετέχει πάντως ἐκείνου καὶ διὰ τοῦτο δεύτερος, ὁ δὲ τρίτος ἔστι μὲν τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ οὗτος· πᾶς γὰρ νοῦς τῷ συζυγοῦντι νοητῷ ὁ αὐτός ἐστιν· ἔχει δὲ τὸ ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ καὶ ὁρᾷ τὸ πρῶτον· ὅσῳ γὰρ πλείων ἡ ἀπόστασις, τοσούτῳ τὸ ἔχειν ἀμυδρότερον [10]. τούτους οὖν τοὺς τρεῖς νόας καὶ δημιουργοὺς ὑποτί- θεται

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The three demiurges (= Intellects, Kings) are as follows:

First demiurgic Intellect	The one who *is* the Intelligible	First king	Phanes
Second demiurgic Intellect	The one who *has* the Intelligible	Second king	Ouranus
Third demiurgic Intellect	The one who *sees* the Intelligible	Third king	Kronos

For Proclus, the triad of demiurgic intellects constitutes "Amelius' most distinctive doctrine" (Dillon 1969, 64). The comparison of Christ with the *logos* must be placed precisely at this level, starting from Amelius' commentary on the *Timaeus* (28c and 39e) in relation to the pseudo-Platonic *Second Letter*. According to a possible correspondence between the Christian Trinity and the three demiurges (= Intellects, Kings), the schema resulting would be as follows: (1) God the Father would be the first demiurge "that which is" (ὤν) – the Intellect which is inseparable from the intelligible, the sphere of the forms, which may be considered to be the model of all sensible things. (2) Christ, the Son of God would be the second demiurge, "that which has" (ἔχων) – the *logos* which contains in him all the *logoi*, i.e. all the forms, identified with the second cause, the true demiurge. (3) The Holy Spirit would be the third demiurge, "that which sees" (ὁρῶν) – the "source of souls".

4. Conclusion

In contrast to Amelius, Porphyry of Tyre does not accept the possibility that a Platonic doctrine may be concealed in the verses of the Evangelist. In his treatise *Against the Christians* (fr. 105 Ramos Jurado = fr. 84 Harnack), Porphyry criticises the position according to which the Son of God would be incarnated on Earth.[39]

καὶ τοὺς παρὰ τῷ <Πλάτωνι> [*Tim.* 40E s] τρεῖς βασιλέας καὶ τοὺς παρ' <Ὀρφεῖ> [frg. 74. 85 p. 186] τρεῖς, Φάνητα καὶ Οὐρανὸν καὶ Κρόνον, καὶ ὁ μάλιστα παρ' αὐτῷ δημιουργὸς ὁ Φάνης ἐστίν.

[39] Cf. Porphyry, *Contra Christianos,* fr. 105 Ramos Jurado = fr. 84 Harnack [Methodius of Olympus, *Contra Porphyrium de cruce*, Bonwetsch (1891, 345)]: "What use is the Son of God for us who have become flesh on earth (σαρκωθεὶς ἐπὶ γῆς)? And why was he placed on the cross, and had to suffer, and was punished with another penalty? And what is the didactic purpose of the cross?

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The doctrine of the incarnation of the *logos* (ἄνθρωπος γενόμενος) implies that the divine – in itself pure and holy – is subject to change and, since the condition of God is above any other reality, this change can only be understood as a diminishing, which is contradictory and illogical.[40] In Fragment 112 (Ramos Jurado = fr. 86 Harnack) Porphyry poses the question from the viewpoint of the basically Stoic argument as follows: if the Son of God is a *logos*, either he is "proffered" (προφορικός) or he is "interior" (ἐνδιάθετος); and if he is neither of these two things, then he is not a *logos*.[41] To start with, therefore, Porphyry denies the divine nature of Jesus. His position as respects the question of the Christ-*logos* seems to lie between that of Plotinus and that of Amelius (cf. Brisson 2011, 287). Porphyry is frontally opposed to the adventures which an incorporeal being such as the *logos* cannot undergo.

More daring in his interpretation than his fellow-student, Amelius uses the same ammunition provided by the Christians he is battling against. Thus, in his Neoplatonic reading, the *logos* of the prologue to the Gospel of John has a very similar function to that of the world soul. On the one hand, it is the supreme cause of all the things which come to be, and on the other hand it redirects its energy towards the superior god from which it comes. In some way, the *logos* is clothed in flesh, but beneath these trappings, suited to the body and the earthly location where it has fallen, there remains the same unalterable *logos.* Hence, the *logos*, when the body is destroyed and is freed, returns to God and takes its place beside him, just as the soul returns to the Intellect and remains united with it.

In *De Civitate Dei* (X.29, 2),[42] Augustine refers to a Platonic philosopher, a friend of Simplician, who claimed that the first verses of John's Gospel (1.1–5), should be engraved in golden letters in the most prominent place in every

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Why did the Son of God, Christ, leave the body after a brief time? And since he is not capable of suffering, how did he come under suffering?" Trans. Berchman (2005, 134); see Benjamins (1999); and see also Becker (2016, 437–441).

[40] On the question of the divinity of Christ in Porphyry's *Contra Christianos*, see Zamora Calvo (2011, 297–303).

[41] This dilemma of Porphyry on John's *logos,* as it appears in Fr.112 (Ramos Jurado = fr. 86 Harnack), originates in a passage taken from Theophylact (*Enarr. in Io.* [*PG* 123.1141]), disciple of Michael Psellus in Constantinople in the late 11th century, before being named Bishop of Ohrid in Bulgaria. Cf. Berchman (2005, 220); Goulet (2010, 145).

[42] "Quod initium sancti Evangelii, cui nomen est secundum Iohannem, quidam Platonicus, sicut a sancto sene Simpliciano, qui postea Mediolanensi Ecclesiae praesedit episcopus, solebamus audire, aureis litteris conscribendum et per omnes ecclesias in locis eminentissimis proponendum esse dicebat." Cf. Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium tractatus*, 2.4. On Augustine's evaluation and his reproaches to the *Platonici* in *De civitate Dei,* see Domínguez Valdés (2017, 73–76)

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church, so that they would always be visible to the Christians. Evidently, for this *Platonicus*, and to a certain extent as Amelius also proposed in the 3rd century, the doctrine expressed in the golden letters is itself purely Platonic, and opposed to Christianity. For both Augustine's Platonic philosopher and for Plotinus' senior disciple the Christian theology can be disputed falling back on the text of John's prologue. Thus Amelius becomes a useful link in the Neoplatonic exegesis of the Christ-*logos*, since he discovers the possibility, based on an interpretation of the *Timaeus* (39e7–9), of establishing a correspondence between the three demiurgic intellects and the Christian Trinity. The *logos* is being, life and thought.

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